

Message Text

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SUBJ: QUEBEC MINISTER SAINT-PIERRE RETHINKS INDEPENDENCE OPTION

1. LA PRESSE OF SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, CARRIED AN INTERVIEW WITH GUY SAINT-PIERRE, QUEBEC MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, UNDER THE HEADLINE: "THE PQ STILL FRIGHTENS HIM, BUT...THE BILINGUALISM CRISIS MAKES SAINT-PIERRE REFLECT."

2. A FREE TRANSLATION FOLLOWS:

"THE NEGATIVE, INDEED 'RACIST', ATTITUDE OF THE ANGLOPHONE PRESS OF CANADA TOWARD THE CONFLICT OF THE (FRANCOPHONE) AIR CONTROLLERS AND THE REACTIONS OF PEOPLE CONSIDERED MODERATE HAVE LED THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE OF QUEBEC, M. GUY SAINT-PIERRE, TO REEVALUATE HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE OPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF QUEBEC. WHILE REAFFIRMING HIS FAITH IN FEDERALISM, M. SAINT-PIERRE MAINTAINED DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH LA PRESSE THAT HE FOUND DISQUIETING THE UNANIMOUS SENTIMENT OF ENGLISH CANADIANS IN THIS CRISIS, NOTING JUST THE SAME, HOWEVER, THAT ONTARIO IS THE PROVINCE WHICH HAS MADE THE MOST EFFORTS TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND QUEBEC.

"EVEN AT THE HOME OF THE MODERATES,' SAID THE MINISTER, 'THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD PREFER TO SEE THREE ENGLISH DOVES THAN THREE FRENCH DOVES.' (COMMENT: THIS IS A REFERENCE TO TRUDEAU,

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MARCHAND AND PELLETIER WHO HAVE BEEN VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS "THE

THREE DOVES" AND "THE THREE WISE MEN.")

"M. SAINT-PIERRE UNDERSCORED THAT THE INTOLERANCE DEMONSTRATED BY THE ENGLISH CANADIANS IN THIS CRISIS COULD WELL LEAD QUEBEC TO TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN AFFAIRS.

" 'IF TORONTO WANTS TO STAY THE FINANCIAL CAPITAL OF CANADA, THEY WILL HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE OF IT' SAID SAINT-PIERRE, 'OTHER-WISE THERE WILL REMAIN NOTHING BUT TO DRAW A LINE ON THE ST. LAWRENCE AND CANADA WILL BE SITUATED FROM VANCOUVER TO OTTAWA.' (COMMENT: THIS SEEMS LIKE ODD GEOGRAPHY BUT THAT IS HOW HE IS QUOTED.) 'PERHAPS,' HE ADDED, 'IN TEN YEARS TORONTO WILL BECOME THE CAPITAL OF AN AMERICAN STATE.'

"BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EXCHANGES WHICH EXIST BETWEEN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC, M. SAINT-PIERRE HELD THAT ONTARIO WOULD HAVE MUCH MORE TO LOSE IN THE EVENT OF A RUPTURE BETWEEN THE TWO PROVINCES. HE EMPHASIZED HOWEVER, THAT HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ANGLO-PHONES LEADS HIM TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE ANY NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND THAT THEY WOULD BE DISPOSED, FOR A CERTAIN PERIOD AT LEAST, TO DEPRIVE THEMSELVES OF THE ADVANTAGES THAT THEY DRAW FROM THEIR EXCHANGES WITH QUEBEC.

"THE MINISTER DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE INDEPENDENCE OF QUEBEC WOULD NECESSARILY PUT CAPITAL TO FLIGHT. HE AFFIRMED NEVERTHELESS THAT INVESTMENTS COULD BE STOPPED FOR A PERIOD OF AT LEAST TWO YEARS, WHICH WOULD ENGENDER A DELAY OF ANNUAL GROWTH ON THE ORDER OF FIFTEEN PERCENT, A DELAY THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO MAKE UP IN THE FUTURE.

" 'AS MUCH AS I WANT TO BE REFORMIST' SAID MR. SAINT-PIERRE, 'SO MUCH DO CERTAIN OPTIONS OF THE PQ (PARTI QUEBECOIS) FRIGHTEN ME.' THAT WHICH THE MINISTER FEARS IN INDEPENDENCE ARE THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS WHICH IT CAN BEGET AND THE CREATION OF A SITUATION SUCH AS THAT WHICH PREVAILS IN PORTUGAL WHERE THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT ARE SUCCESSIVELY TEARING AWAY CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY.

"BECAUSE M. SAINT-PIERRE FEELS THAT WITH THE PQ IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL SWING TOWARD THE LEFT. 'IT CAN ALSO EASILY GO TOWARD THE RIGHT' HE EMPHASIZED, IN AFFIRMING THAT 'THE LINE THAT SEPARATES CERTAIN PQ DEPUTIES FROM THE LIBERALS IS OCCASIONALLY VERY THIN.' (COMMENT: THIS WOULD APPEAR TO MAKE SENSE ONLY IF ONE ASSUMES THAT SAINT-PIERRE PERCEIVES THE LIBERALS, OR PERCEIVES THE PUBLIC AS PERCEIVING THE LIBERALS, AS RIGHTIST.)

"INDEPENDENCE IS AT THE SAME TIME A QUESTION OF OPTIONS AND OF MEN. M. SAINT-PIERRE INDICATES THAT HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND,
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AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE ATTITUDE OF M. CLAUDE MORIN. 'IS IT A MATTER OF A FUNCTIONARY FRUSTRATED BY TEN YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL (GOVERNMENT) WHO HAS DECIDED TO CHOOSE HIMSELF ANOTHER SPRINGBOARD OF NEGOTIATIONS?' SAID M. SAINT-PIERRE.

"THE MINISTER HELD THAT THE INDEPENDENCE OF QUEBEC WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO MORE EASILY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO AND THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DO IN TWENTY YEARS WHEN THEY WILL HAVE FORMED COMPETENCE IN ALL SECTORS AND THE GAME WILL BE DIFFERENT.

" 'IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FIRST TO PUT ONE'S HANDS ON ALL THAT WHICH BELONGS TO US, A LITTLE LIKE ALBERTA WITH ITS OIL', STRESSED SAINT-PIERRE.

"THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE WOULD ACTUALLY FEAR FEAR THAT ON CERTAIN LEVELS, SUCH AS THOSE OF MONEY AND COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES, AN INDE-

PENDENT QUEBEC (MIGHT?) FIND ITSELF AGAIN IN A STATE OF DEPENDENCE VIS-A-VIS ENGLISH CANADA.

"AS FOR HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, MR. SAINT-PIERRE STRESSED THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF M. BOURASSA HAS NOT BEEN PUT IN DOUBT AND HE DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF A SAINT-PIERRE PLAN OR A GARNEAU CLAN WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO COURT THE SUCCESSION AS HAD ALREADY BEEN SUGGESTED IN CERTAIN PLACES.

"SAINT-PIERRE AT THE SAME TIME DEPLORED THE FACT THAT IN QUEBEC SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY THE PRIME MINISTERS HAD LEFT THEIR POSTS EITHER AS THE RESULT OF DEATH OR AS THE RESULT OF A DEFEAT.

" 'NOT ONE OF THEM LEFT IN FULL GLORY, AS HAPPENS IN ONTARIO' SAID M. SAINT-PIERRE.

"AND HASTENING TO BE PRECISE, 'DO NOT THINK ABOVE ALL THAT I SAY THIS WITH REGARD TO M. BOURASSA.'"

3. IN VIEW OF THE NUMBER OF QUEBEC MINISTERS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE "BILINGUALISM IN THE AIR" BATTLE, IT IS AS POSSIBLE THAT SAINT-PIERRE WAS JUST VENTING FRUSTRATION AS THAT HE WAS OR IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE INDEPENDENCE OPTION. CERTAINLY HE HAVE IT NO RINGING ENDORSEMENT.
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